ENS RATIONIS LUTHERO-CALVINICUM

Explained by Aristotle Brought Back to Life

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Sonnet 5 Translation

THE ENS RATIONIS
OF THE LUTHERANS AND CALVINISTS,

Explained by Aristotle Brought Back to Life.

By the Author

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of the Society of Jesus.

FROM THE PRINTING HOUSE OF JOBUS HERTZIUS.

In the Year 1659.

Translator's Introduction

Melchior Cornaeus was born at Brilon, in the Duchy of Westphalia (then part of the Electorate of Cologne), in April 1598, and died at Mainz on 13 March 1665. He entered the Society of Jesus in 1618. During the Thirty Years' War, fleeing the Swedish invasion of the Rhineland, he took refuge in France, where he taught philosophy for seven years at the Jesuit college of Toulouse. On his return to Germany he became professor of dogmatic and controversial theology at Mainz and at Würzburg, serving as rector of the Jesuit college at Würzburg from 1659 to 1662 and at Mainz from 1664, and acting as cathedral preacher in both cities. He was also drawn into the political controversy over the restitution of ecclesiastical property in the territories the Peace of Westphalia had left in Protestant hands, a cause he defended together with his confrere Heinrich Wangnereck.

Cornaeus was a prolific and combative controversialist — some twenty-seven works of his are recorded, directed chiefly against the Strasbourg preacher Johann Georg Dorsche, and, within his own Order, against his confrere Johann Vervaux. His most substantial work of philosophy, the *Curriculum Philosophiae Peripateticae* (Würzburg, 1657), was a large and richly illustrated textbook, notable among historians of science for its willingness to let Aristotle be corrected by the telescope: Cornaeus argues there that, had Aristotle lived to see the sunspots and the moons of Jupiter, he would have abandoned his own doctrine of an incorruptible heaven. That same device — an Aristotle recalled from the underworld to confront the modern world he never knew — became the organizing conceit of Cornaeus's best-known series of controversial dialogues, the *Aristoteles Redivivus* ("Aristotle Brought Back to Life"), published in successive installments from 1652 to 1660. In the first of these, *Aristoteles redivivus Romano-Catholicus* (1652), the revived philosopher journeys among both Protestants and Catholics before declaring himself, in the dialogue's own words, "aut papista, aut

non Christianus" — "either a Papist, or no Christian at all."

The present work, the *Ens Rationis Luthero-Calvinicum ab Aristotele redivivo explicatum* ("The Ens Rationis of the Lutherans and Calvinists, Explained by Aristotle Brought Back to Life"), belongs to this same series, printed at Würzburg in 1659 and dedicated to Maurus, Abbot of St. Stephan's within the walls of that city and formerly rector of its University. An *ens rationis*, in the scholastic vocabulary Cornaeus and his readers shared, is a "being of reason" — a thing that exists only as a construction of the mind, with no reality outside it: a chimera. The dialogue's conceit is that Aristotle, returned once more to the world, is persuaded by his interlocutor Nicodemus to examine, one by one, a series of propositions maintained by the Lutherans and Calvinists — among them that man has no freedom in acting well, that faith alone saves, that every sin without exception is mortal, and that the Bible is, of itself, self-evidently clear to every reader — and to judge, by the light of natural reason alone, whether such propositions can be anything more than entia rationis: fictions with no more substance than a philosopher's afterthought.

The dialogue is organized in three short chapters establishing the relation of faith to reason, followed by a longer third chapter in which eight such Entia Rationis are taken up and examined in turn, each under its own heading, before Nicodemus, at the close, professes himself — if not yet converted — at least persuaded to think better of the Roman Catholics than he had before.

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Dedication

TO THE MOST REVEREND AND MOST RELIGIOUS LORD D. MAURUS of the Order of St. Benedict, Most Worthy Abbot of the Monastery of St. Stephen within the walls of Würzburg, formerly Most Magnificent Rector of the University of Würzburg, My Most Gracious Lord,

It is a marvel that our Heterodox opponents — otherwise most wise in human affairs — when they contend with us in the controverted matters of faith and religion, in very many points where they depart from us, say and maintain such things that one might more rightly call them the chimeras of a Sinonian brain's idle contrivances than the serious thoughts of a wise mind — so little do they know how to philosophize in accordance with the guidance of right reason. Since I had resolved to demonstrate this matter in a very brief little commentary, I did not wish to undertake it without the auspices of your most ample name, being fully persuaded that I would now find in you no less gracious a patron than I lately found, with renewed strength, in you as Most Magnificent Rector, together with the whole University of Würzburg. That office indeed, which you gladly bore for the space of some years, was our good fortune; but that you laid it down of your own accord was in keeping with ancient custom. And although in that matter you have, according to the custom of your fathers, gone beyond the laws, so as to resign the Academic staff and scepter, you have nevertheless not on that account in any way laid aside your outstanding zeal for me and for public letters. For to be a constant patron and favorer of truth and of the Muses is both the mark of your most praiseworthy character and of your long since well-known virtue. Certainly if hereafter — and especially in this contest undertaken against the non-Catholics — you are going to show toward me (as I fully trust) no lesser inclination of benevolent spirit, that will altogether bind me to wish never to be, or to be called, anything other than, with

my whole soul,

Of Your Most Reverend and Most Religious, Most Magnificent and Most Gracious Lordship, the Servant and Client,

MELCHIOR CORNAEUS, of the Society of Jesus.

THE ENS RATIONIS LUTHERO-CALVINICUM

Explained by Aristotle brought back to life.

NICODEMUS. How fortunate that I set foot outside today, that I should run into you! O welcome chance meeting.

ARISTOTLE. And to you too, greetings in return.

NICOD. Are you perchance Aristotle?

ARIST. The very man himself.

NICOD. Recently returned from the underworld?

ARIST. Just so.

NICOD. I would like a word with you, if it's permitted.

ARIST. Not a word — as many as you like, permitted.

NICOD. But I do not want the things I am about to discuss with you privately, without witnesses, to be scattered afterward abroad among the crowd. I want my conversations to remain secret.

ARIST. As you wish. May Angerona be with you as you please — speak at last.

NICOD. I am exceedingly astonished, Aristotle, that when you deliberately wished to become a Christian from a pagan, you chose to go over — not to us, as reason itself demanded — but to the Papists.

ARIST. But I am far more astonished that you should be astonished at that.

NICOD. You ought certainly to have acted according to reason in what you did.

ARIST. And indeed I think I did.

NICOD. You ought, then, rather to have joined yourself to us.

ARIST. To whom — "us"?

NICOD. The Lutherans.

ARIST. So I should have hurled myself onto the Scylla of religion.

NICOD. Or at least the Calvinists.

ARIST. Then I would have fallen into Charybdis, driven not by the guidance of reason but by the onrush of madness, tossed as if by some raging storm. Do you want me to tell you in a word? When I had resolved to become a Christian, and to do so by reason, as befits a philosopher, as guide and mistress, I could never have wished to become anything but a Papist.

NICOD. Is that so? A Papist?

ARIST. Absolutely.

NICOD. And not a Lutheran?

ARIST. No.

NICOD. Not a Calvinist?

ARIST. No, no — not unless I had first cast off and thrown away the rudder of reason, and, driven by the uncertain winds of erroneous doctrine, had chosen of my own accord to give my soul's raft over to be seized upon shoals and shallows. Do you want me to say plainly what I think?

NICOD. I want that very much.

ARIST. But let it be said without offense to you.

NICOD. Indeed it will be a pleasure to hear it.

ARIST. I could not have become either a Lutheran or a Calvinist without first becoming out of my mind and bereft of reason.

NICOD. What are you saying, Aristotle?

ARIST. What is the case. For indeed, when I weighed your non-Catholic religion on the scale of sound reason, I found that most of those things peculiar to you, by which you differ from the Papists, are the dissonant offspring of ill-conceived minds, unlucky births of a feverish brain, monstrous chimeras, fictitious hobgoblins, thoughts that destroy themselves — or, to speak in my philosophical manner, Entia Rationis, beings of reason, which have and can have no subsistence anywhere except in the intellect of the one thinking them, and which have nothing of reality except that they are thought by reason to exist, though they neither are nor ever can anywhere be.

NICOD. Gentler words, Aristotle! Do you think us out of our minds?

ARIST. I do not indeed think you altogether out of your minds, since I see you act wisely in many matters concerning the governance and administration of human life. Yet I cannot restrain myself from vehemently marveling by what reasoning you allow your minds, in the business of religion and eternal salvation — a matter of far greater weight — to be deflected so far from reason and the genuine rule of the

intellect, that you admit, among the undoubted articles of your faith, chimeras and, as I said before, empty beings of reason.

Chapter I.

The articles of faith can sometimes be above human reason, but cannot be contrary to it.

NICOD. How I fear, Aristotle, lest your human philosophy — too much opposed to divine wisdom — still holds you fast! Beware, beware, lest while you strive to weigh faith on the level of our reason, you stray far from the truth, and while you are wise in the things of the world, you fail to be wise in the things of God. One thing is the faith of Christ, another the dogma of the Academy. One thing is what heaven and God obscurely reveal, another what your Lyceum seems haughtily to demonstrate. Whoever values Plato more than Paul, reason more than revelation, science more than faith, is no Christian.

ARIST. To what end do you say this? Do you think me so dull and untrained as not to know what the difference is between faith and knowledge? I have known that for a long time now.

NICOD. From what you were saying a little earlier, I conceived a not unfounded fear that you might wish to force our Christian faith to the standard of your philosophy. That is certainly forbidden, and is strongly opposed by Paul, that vessel of election and Doctor of all the nations, who openly declares: "See that no one deceive you through philosophy" (Col. 2:8). And: "Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" (1 Cor. 1:20). And what is the wisdom of this world if not philosophy? Therefore he adds: "It pleased God, through the foolishness of preaching, to save those who believe" — not, of course, foolishness in the eyes of God, but what would be judged foolishness by the philosophers. "The things that are foolish of the world, God has chosen" — and those things which seem to you and to your philosophy

dissonant, mad, empty, chimerical, and beings of reason, are altogether approved and accepted by God. From this same Paul, then, I urge you, Aristotle, not to place too much confidence in that light of your genius or reason of which you boast so greatly, but rather, if you seem to yourself wise in this age, to become a fool that you may be wise. "For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God" (1 Cor. 3:18-19).

ARIST. I am amazed that you bring forward things of this sort, which have nothing to do with our matter. I know what the Apostle calls the foolishness of the world and of preaching. And if it is permitted to glory with the same Paul, I have long since embraced with my whole heart the cross of Christ and the humility and modesty of the Christian life, which the unbelieving world regards as foolishness and turns away from. Many things placed above the region of reason and natural philosophy, but by no means manifestly repugnant to it, I have willingly admitted into my mind as handed down by faith. I believe in one threefold hypostasis in the one nature of the divinity, one and the same God, yet three really and truly distinct persons from one another. I believe that God was made man — not by any mutual confusion of natures, that is, of the divine and the human, or by conversion into some third nature, but by personal and hypostatic union. I believe that a virgin brought forth a child while her integrity remained intact. I believe that the body of Christ, as great as it is, is at once in heaven and on earth under the Eucharistic species, in an undivided mode of presence — that is, whole in the whole and whole in each and every particle of them. I believe that the primordial matter of all things, which I once called ὕëç, and, as it were, the raw timber-stock of nature's fabric, was made by God out of nothing. For although these and other such things, which are established by the authority of the revealing Godhead, are higher than our natural reason, they are nonetheless not repugnant to it.

NICOD. What? The Trinity, the incarnation of the Word, the birth from a virgin, the undivided presence of an individual body, the creation of matter from pure nothing — are these not opposed to your philosophy, which you have hammered out with such great labor of genius? What is more of a chimera than a threefold unity in a thing utterly one and the same? What is more of a fox-goose than a man-God? What could more rightly seem, and be judged, an Ens Rationis than a Virgin-Mother? Surely all these things, if you consult your reason and your philosophy, are madness; but if you consult the Christian faith, they are now, and must be, wisdom for you. In exactly the same manner, O philosopher, you must judge concerning all those things which in our anti-Papist religion seem to you to fight against reason. Nor is it fitting that you condemn as infamous, in the name of reason, whatever you perhaps do not so grasp. Even within the secret storehouse of nature not a few things lie hidden and escape our sight — and what wonder is it, if very many mysteries of our religion and faith exceed the sharpness of the human mind? Consider that saying of the great Augustine, otherwise well known to the crowd: "Faith is to believe what you do not see" (Tract. 40 on John).

ARIST. Always the same ground you tread. It is not the same thing to exceed our reason, and to manifestly contradict our reason. Our faith is above reason, not against it.

NICOD. Is the Trinity not against it?

ARIST. It is not.

NICOD. Is the incarnation not?

ARIST. It is not.

NICOD. Is the Virgin Mother, and the creation of things from nothing, not?

ARIST. Certainly not. These things are above the light of natural reason, but not against it — higher, not adverse; different, not repugnant — beings of faith, not beings of reason; miracles, not monstrosities — which our intellect, still lacking the light of faith, should be amazed at, not deny. Come now, tell me: to which precise dictate of the natural light is the Trinity manifestly repugnant?

NICOD. Do you not know? To that which you yourself boast of, Topics I.7.c.1.10.5: "Things which really agree in some third thing also really agree with one another"; and: "Things which really disagree with some third thing disagree with one another." From this, indeed, even an infidel and an Antitrinitarian could argue thus: Things that really agree in some third thing also really agree with one another. But the Father and the Son really agree in this, that they are God, and they are really one and the same God. Therefore they also really agree with one another, and are really one and the same with one another. Therefore they are not distinct persons. Nor will he charge less dangerously against us in this way: What is really the same as something cannot be really multiplied, unless the other thing is also multiplied. But the divine personality is really the same as the divine nature. Therefore personality cannot be multiplied unless the divine nature is also multiplied. But personality is threefold. Therefore the nature, or Godhead, is also threefold. Therefore there are three Godheads and three Gods. Do you shudder? Rightly so. And yet either this monstrosity must be admitted, or it must certainly be granted that some dogma of our faith is manifestly repugnant to natural reason.

ARIST. On the contrary, neither of those need be admitted.

NICOD. How then will you give a sufficient answer to an infidel philosopher arguing in the way I described? The major of the syllogism is your own; the minor is evident; therefore the conclusion is inescapable.

ARIST. The major premise, understood in the sense in which it was explained by me and is the offspring of a properly conducted philosophy, in no way harms the faith or the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. When I first put forward that saying, which was afterward received by everyone under the name and dignity of an axiom, I was thinking only of created, singular, incommunicable, finite, and limited things; nor did it then enter my mind to speak or make mention of what is universal, communicable, infinite, and unlimited. So this is the sense of my saying: things that really agree in some third thing that is singular, incommunicable, finite, and limited, also really agree with one another. Hence, just as a sophist would not rightly argue in this manner: "Things that really agree in some third thing also really agree with one another and are the same. But Peter and Paul really agree in some third thing, namely in being man — for Peter is a man, and Paul is a man. Therefore Peter and Paul really agree with one another. Therefore Peter is Paul" — so absurdly, from the very same principle, would an Anti-Trinitarian argue: "Things that really agree in some third thing also really agree with one another. But the Father and the Son in the divine reality really agree in this, that they are God. Therefore they also really agree with one another. Therefore the Father is the Son." Now tell me: does that principle of mine and of my philosophy — "things that are the same, etc." — conflict with the real distinction between Peter and Paul?

NICOD. I would not think so, indeed.

ARIST. Therefore neither does it conflict with the real distinction of the divine persons from one another, or with the real identity of each of them with the divine nature.

NICOD. That is so indeed, if men in general understood it in the way you have now explained. But they do not understand it thus.

ARIST. Whether men understand it or not — that is not my concern. They certainly ought to understand it first, before they attempt to examine the truth of the faith by its rule. Now then, if my philosophy, not rightly grasped by men, conflicts with the faith and its dogma, that is to be ascribed not to the fault of the philosophy but to the stupidity of the men. Nor should it be said that faith is contrary to reason, but rather that it is contrary to natural ignorance. I was speaking of finite and limited things when I said "things that are the same, etc." Concerning the infinite and unlimited, the reasoning is different. For certain things can be really the same as some one thing that is infinite in every genus of being simply speaking, and yet be really distinguished from one another among themselves, if they are opposed relatively to one another and are not opposed to that third. This distinction between the infinite God and finite creatures arises from that very highest, most eminent, and most infinite fullness of perfection, which at once embraces the highest simplicity, altogether excluding all essential and substantial diversity and all real composition, and yet also the highest fecundity in producing and generating. For fecundity requires a real distinction between the producing and the produced person, while simplicity requires the identity of both with the essence and in the essence.

NICOD. Now indeed I understand this, as far as human weakness allows. But what will you say, Aristotle, on behalf of the mystery of the divine Incarnation, if it should be objected to you from your own philosophy: God cannot be made man, because the essences of things are immutable and necessary. What is essentially independent cannot become dependent, nor can what is uncreated become created, nor the necessary become non-necessary, nor the immortal mortal, nor the invisible visible, nor the infinite finite, nor the immeasurable non-immeasurable but confined to a certain place and time. What indeed? Are these not contradictory and mutually destructive predicates? But God is necessary, man is non-necessary but contingent;

God is independent, man is dependent — and this by God's absolute and fatal necessity, man is not. Therefore God cannot become man. Surely, Aristotle, here either faith must be denied to you, or your philosophy, or it must be conceded that our faith is manifestly repugnant to the natural light.

ARIST. If you were a philosopher, or even half a theologian, you would not speak so incautiously. As the essences of things are immutable and necessary, so in Christ they remained unchanged. For humanity was not converted into divinity, nor conversely, nor was either changed into some third thing. Far be it. Let Eutyches the heresiarch say that, not an orthodox man. Divinity was not made humanity, nor humanity divinity, nor is God humanity, nor man divinity — but the natures remained altogether unvaried in their essential properties.

NICOD. Yet God was made man.

ARIST. So indeed, but with the diversity of both natures preserved. In Christ, God is man, not by identity but by the union of both natures in one hypostasis or suppositum. For a thing can become one and the same as another in two ways. First, by the real identity of both — as in the same individual Peter, "man" is "animal," between which there is on the side of reality no diversity, but rather the highest real indistinction and unity. Second, by mutual union — as a wall "is" and "becomes" white. For there neither is, nor can be, real identity between the entity of the wall and its whiteness, since the latter is an accident of the former substance, and the latter can perish and often does, while the former still really persists. But between the two there intervenes that extreme, namely, union, and identity with the suppositum in which they both inhere. For whiteness and the entity of the wall are united to one another, and are found together at once in the same suppositum. Hence, although it is permissible to say "the wall is white," it is nevertheless not permissible to predicate thus: "the wall is whiteness."

For the former indicates the identity of the subject or suppositum, which really is on the side of reality; the latter asserts an identity of natures, which does not exist. Now coming to our matter: God was not made man in the first way, by a mutual identity of the divine and human nature (for that is manifestly repugnant), but by the union of both natures in the same person of the Word. Hence it is not permissible to say "God is humanity" or "the Godhead is humanity," or the reverse — but it is rightly and properly said: "God is man," and conversely. Namely, because the former asserts a real identity of natures, which is repugnant, while the latter asserts the unity of the suppositum, or the union of both natures in the same suppositum, which is truly found in Christ. Do you grasp this?

NICOD. I grasp it with difficulty, since I have scarcely ever heard such things discussed among our people, and they are altogether tasteless to my palate.

ARIST. Because your palate is a philosopher's palate, and your taste altogether plebeian.

NICOD. Though my taste be plebeian, I nevertheless easily perceive that you have not yet resolved those implicative predicates which I brought up before.

ARIST. Which ones, if you please?

NICOD. Being necessary and non-necessary, dependent and non-dependent, mortal and non-mortal. How can these be present at once in one and the same Christ, God-man?

ARIST. There is no delay here for a philosophical mind. These are not contradictories in Christ. Nor are they said univocally, and in the same sense, of the same thing, according to the same respect — but according to different respects. For Christ is eternal, necessary, essentially independent, immortal, immeasurable, etc., according to his

divine nature; and the same is temporal, contingent, dependent, mortal, and (once) dead, and not immeasurable — not according to the same respect, but according to his human nature, with which he is also endowed. Therefore, just as it is in no way repugnant or contradictory for you to be, at the same time, material according to your body and immaterial according to your soul, so neither is it repugnant or contradictory for Christ to be man, and immortal God, and mortal.

NICOD. What you have now made clear, I never perceived so clearly before. But go on, if you please and if you can, to unravel the rest.

ARIST. Namely, the virgin birth, and the undivided presence of the body of Christ in the mystery of the Eucharist, and the production of matter from nothing, seemed to you to conflict with the natural light. But none of these is opposed to that dictate of reason which, rightly and truly understood, holds true. Reason and natural philosophy teach that human birth, according to the accustomed laws of nature, requires the cooperation of both parents and of sex, joined with the destruction of virginal integrity. But no reason, no philosophy, teaches that it must be so in such a way that it could never happen otherwise even by the absolute power of the Godhead. In exactly the same way, that same reason recognizes that a natural individual body — such as the body of Christ existing in the Eucharist, according to the accustomed law of nature — is not, and cannot be, present except divisibly, so that the parts remain external to one another, mutually impenetrable. Finally, it holds that nothing comes from nothing, if indeed we consider only the natural powers of secondary causes, but that all things are produced and drawn out from some pre-existing matter, as it were from the fecund bosom of nature. Yet that God, by His omnipotent will, cannot ever either place a body undivided and interpenetrating, or create something out of pure and sheer nothing — this, if it is wise at all, human philosophy in no way asserts. Indeed, once faith is granted — that God produced the world, finite itself, in finite time — natural

reason cannot but recognize some creation of some thing, namely, of primary matter. For if God drew all things out of matter, whence, I ask, did He receive that matter? And if He drew it out of some other matter, again I press the question about that other one — whence did it come? If He did not draw this out of anything, and yet produced it, then He produced it not out of something but out of nothing. Therefore He created it. Therefore, according to reason and true philosophy, God created something — or else, in the origin of matter, an infinite regress must be granted, which nature no less abhors than she abhors a vacuum.

Chapter II.

Faith contrary to natural reason is false.

So far, then, is it from being the case that our Christian faith is repugnant to natural reason, that one might even, on that very ground, accuse and convict some religion of falsehood, if it can be openly shown to fight against the principles of the natural light. I ask you, what else is our theology but faith reasoning discursively? But discourse consists in the natural light. Does not God wish pagan philosophers to be converted to the faith? Therefore He wishes them to be dealt with by reason. Indeed, does He not wish rational men to use reason when they worship, love God? Why then would He not also wish reason to be used, when they give assent of faith to something He has, though obscurely, revealed to them? Let that be the religion of beasts which is inimical to reason. What conflicts with reason is false. What is false cannot be believed with true faith. Therefore what conflicts with reason cannot be believed with true faith. Who is the author of our natural light, if not God? Who of faith, if not that same God? But God cannot ever be the author of opposing lights, both the true and the false. Therefore neither can He be the author of a reason that conflicts with faith.

NICOD. Nothing is truer than this. Indeed it is by natural reason, and not by Scripture alone, that we attack the Turks and heretics — which would by no means be permitted, if reason, or the formal word of God, were opposed to faith.

ARIST. Now at last you speak soundly. He who believes against reason does not believe, but raves. Divine faith demands the obedience of the mind, not madness.

NICOD. That is altogether how the matter stands. He who wishes to believe rightly must conduct himself prudently. Now prudence is above all reason. Therefore it follows.

ARIST. Well said. Let us now return to where we digressed.

Chapter III.

The Luthero-Calvinist faith and religion is opposed to the natural light and to right reason.

That faith and religion which is opposed to the natural light and to the discernment of reason is also opposed to truth, and ought to be admitted into the mind by no one. But the Luthero-Calvinist faith and religion is manifestly opposed to the natural light and the dictate of reason. Therefore it is also opposed to truth, and ought to be admitted into the mind by no one. The major is evident, and already granted by yourself.

NICOD. But how false is the minor!

ARIST. I shall show that it is most true, and unless you are more obstinate than a beast, you will yourself acknowledge it.

NICOD. It would be a crime on your part, Aristotle, if you do not make good on what you say.

ARIST. I shall see to it that you have no doubt of it.

The first Ens Rationis of the Luthero-Calvinists:

Man is in no way free in acting well.

Let us not, however, dispute rashly and with agitation; but let us bring forward one by one the things I mean to charge against you (for it neither pleases me, nor is it permitted by the shortness of time, to bring forward everything at once). Let this, then, be the first paradigm of the Luthero-Calvinist Ens Rationis: that man is in no way free to act well. Why do you wrinkle your brow, I ask? Why do you look so grim? Come, answer if you please. Is not a man without freedom, or lacking free will, a monstrosity of a man? Or by what, indeed, does man surpass a beast, except by reason and the power of free will? What do you say? Is a man who is not free not a chimera, not a non-man? But a man who is not free is not a man. Therefore a man who is not free is a chimera. Therefore he is also indeed a fictitious being of reason.

NICOD. Good heavens, how awkwardly you stumble, philosopher, right at the very threshold of the dispute! I do not indeed deny that a man altogether stripped and despoiled of every part of necessity and of the whole freedom of will ought to be judged by us not a man, but a monstrosity of a man. But no one has ever yet fallen into such madness as to assert that our will lacks arbitrium and freedom in absolutely every action. Far be that impiety. We confess that a man can walk, and can abstain from walking wherever he pleases. We grant that he can do, or not do, many things that lie within the powers of nature. But in the works of piety, which concern the eternal salvation of the soul, we assert that he does not act freely, but that he is so acted upon by God that he cannot not act. This is now just as little a chimera as it is little a chimera to assert that God is not free to act wickedly. Tell me, I ask, what do you think? Can God act morally wickedly and sin?

ARIST. No, no.

NICOD. Therefore God lacks freedom to act wickedly.

ARIST. He altogether lacks it.

NICOD. Therefore God, who is not free, is an Ens Rationis.

ARIST. In that manner, He who is not free is not an Ens Rationis, but something real, existing on the side of reality.

NICOD. Why then is man, in good works pertaining to piety and salvation, not free, an Ens Rationis?

ARIST. Because, namely, that God be entirely free from the stain of sin, and indeed so free that He cannot ever be stained by any at all, is in no way repugnant to His essence and character. But that the salutary actions of faith, hope, and the other infused virtues in man not be free is altogether absurd, and alien both to our reason and to the very nature of God Himself.

NICOD. Namely, this latter point ought not to be merely stated by you, but firmly proven.

ARIST. There will be no delay on my part in this. To hear it, then. That God should be a tyrant, and command things that cannot be performed by men — especially if He threatens and inflicts the gravest punishments — is alien, not merely to every mode of human reason, but to divine reason as well. Is that not so?

NICOD. But from your Luthero-Calvinist doctrine, God is a tyrant!

ARIST. Away with that unspeakable name. You are fabricating a slander against us.

ARIST. I am not fabricating a slander, but charging you with a true crime. I prove it. If some human prince commanded his subject

peoples, under pain of the most atrocious death through tortures to be endured, to do things not within their power, he would indeed be a monstrous tyrant. Let this be an example: if he ordered each one, within an hour, either to pay a million gold pieces to the treasury or to be hanged from the gallows.

NICOD. Granted.

ARIST. Therefore God too would be a tyrant, if He commanded mortals to perform actions of piety on this condition and law, that those who fail are destined, by everlasting fires among the shades below, to burn forever.

NICOD. Go on further, Aristotle.

ARIST. But according to you, God demands of us, under this degree of severity, that we believe — and unless we believe, He destines us to the flames of Orcus. But to believe itself, according to you and your Luthero-Calvinist dogma, is not within the freedom of our will, such that we could, at our pleasure, either act or not act. Therefore, according to you and your dogma, God is a tyrant. Therefore, according to you and your dogma, God is an Ens Rationis. For a tyrant-God is an Ens Rationis. Therefore also man, not free to believe, is an Ens Rationis.

NICOD. You conclude savagely, Aristotle.

ARIST. But truly, from your own principles, which you yourself granted.

NICOD. It is not altogether outside the power of us men to believe — no. If we lacked the help of heavenly grace, we could indeed do nothing. But with the help of grace, we certainly can. This is the doctrine of Calvin and Chemnitz.

ARIST. You accomplish nothing, nor do you free yourself from the Ens Rationis. For in the first place, if it is your doctrine that without the help of grace you cannot believe, and yet with it you can (which is also our doctrine, and altogether true), you stupidly and against all reason maintain that it is not within the freedom of your will that you believe. Whoever tries to link these two dogmas together in this way fabricates an Ens Rationis.

NICOD. See to it, Aristotle, that in charging us with an Ens Rationis, you do not fashion one yourself.

ARIST. I demonstrate evidently what I have asserted. I ask you: can we effect anything at all in natural operations without God and His natural help?

NICOD. We cannot. For we are, as philosophy speaks, a being from another, dependent on God both in existing and in acting.

ARIST. Go on. Yet in those same exercises of nature, can we not do all things with divine assistance?

NICOD. Yes.

ARIST. And without divine assistance, we can do nothing at all?

NICOD. Yes.

ARIST. And yet, with both of these being true, the freedom of our will nonetheless so stands that in natural things we are said to act or not act at our pleasure. Therefore also, together with the fact that in salutary actions of piety, and in eliciting the act of divine faith, we can do nothing without the help of grace, yet with it we can — the whole, integral, and free liberty of believing stands intact. Therefore you who grant free will and liberty in the former case, and deny it in the latter, wage manifest war against reason, and fabricate an Ens Rationis. Now dare to mutter something.

NICOD. The reasoning is different for natural and for supernatural things.

ARIST. Different indeed it is, but not in this matter which we are disputing. If there is an equal need for divine help in both, why should that need destroy freedom in the one case, while preserving it intact in the other? Certainly here you are caught violating reason. Furthermore: granted that our will needs God's special assistance in order to act rightly and laudably, that fact does not, in your own opinion, take away its freedom. For notwithstanding this, you nonetheless assert that the human will is so moved by God in works of piety that it cannot not act. You say it is not integral and free for man to act well in supernatural matters. Therefore, whether the help of divine grace be present or not, whether indeed it needs it or not, it always remains that man is not free. Therefore it remains that God is a tyrant and cruel. Therefore the Luthero-Calvinist Ens Rationis remains.

NICOD. You are strangling the very gullet of my understanding, philosopher. I scarcely find what to reply. A curse on Luther, a curse on Calvin, the authors of this madness! I do not wish to struggle further against my own mind in this matter. This much, however, remains certain to me: that those things which the just Godhead seriously and under threat of eternal punishment commands us to do can and must be freely observed by all. For what could He command me, that is not within my power to do?

ARIST. Hear more chimerical fictions from this same chapter. That no man, having heard the preaching of the Gospel, can sin by not believing, or act rightly by believing — is that not alien to reason?

NICOD. Altogether. For it is quite certain that some can, and indeed have, sinned in that way.

ARIST. But if believing is free to no one, then no one sins by not believing, and no one, even by believing, acts rightly and laudably. For

sin requires that it be done voluntarily and freely — and for this very reason, brute animals, whatever they may seem outwardly to do amiss, do not properly sin, because they are borne by the necessary impulse of an unfree nature. He is a beast who thinks that true moral guilt and stain can be incurred by any man without freedom, since for that very reason it cannot be incurred by a beast.

NICOD. I indeed cannot agree with our people here, who philosophize quite differently on this. I was struck, when I recently read that saying of Augustine, *On True Religion*, ch. 14: "But indeed sin is so far an evil that it is in no way sin unless it be voluntary — and this indeed is so manifest, that no small number even among the unlearned dissent from it." Certainly he is speaking there of free voluntariness, and that great Doctor of Christendom seemed to me to banish and eliminate from the whole number of men (for these are either learned or unlearned) our preachers, who exclude freedom of will from sin.

ARIST. Then, whichever way your people contend here, they clash against reason. For whether they grant that no man sins by not believing, or, in order to remove this blemish, say that although believing is not free, yet someone can still sin by not believing — either way they fabricate an Ens Rationis. For that no one sins by not believing is an Ens Rationis. And that someone sins even without freedom is equally an Ens Rationis.

NICOD. I am weary of a matter so manifest.

ARIST. Nor do your people wage war on reason any less, when they busy themselves exhorting men to believe and to lead a life of virtue.

NICOD. Why do you say this now?

ARIST. Because indeed it is stupid and full of madness to wish to impel someone, by counsel and persuasion, toward that which is not

free for the one you desire to counsel. For would you not say that a preacher was raving, if he exhorted his hearers to prophesy, to speak in unknown tongues, to raise the dead to life, to perform miracles above the power and order of nature, in the manner of the Apostles?

NICOD. Certainly — because such things are neither free nor possible for us.

ARIST. But morally good actions, as your own people teach, are likewise not free for us.

NICOD. Yet they are possible.

ARIST. No more so than those others, certainly, if you wish to hold consistently to your dogma and not to rave.

NICOD. I do not quite understand that.

ARIST. I will show it manifestly. In the first place, neither of these classes of action is free.

NICOD. So our people say.

ARIST. Furthermore, we cannot believe, hope, love, without the help of undeserved grace. Likewise, we cannot prophesy, speak in tongues, work miracles, without the help of the same kind of grace. With divine, supernatural, and gratuitous help, we can believe. With the same help, we can also prophesy.

NICOD. That is certain.

ARIST. Therefore both are, in the same way, neither free nor possible for us. Or if you can, produce a disparity.

NICOD. I find none to bring forward, so help me heaven.

ARIST. Therefore, when your people exhort their hearers to believe, hope, love, they are no less mad than if they exhorted them to prophesy

and raise the dead to life.

NICOD. As much as I might wish otherwise, I cannot indeed sufficiently repel this charge of madness.

§ II.

The second Ens Rationis of the Luthero-Calvinists: Faith alone saves.

ARIST. And what shall I say of your Luthero-Calvinist faith, in which you exult so greatly? What of "faith alone," without works? What of "salvific and justifying" faith? It is a pure and simple chimera, if you weigh it on the true scale of solid and Christian reason.

NICOD. Better words, Aristotle. I would not think that could be shown.

ARIST. On the contrary, I will show it more clearly than the noonday light. Faith alone is, and is called, that which is considered apart from the good works proceeding from charity and the rest of the company of the virtues. But this, according to the Apostle James, is dead.

NICOD. Our Luther does not admit that epistle of James as sacred.

ARIST. Yet you yourselves now hold it as canonical divine word. Namely, you disciples are wiser than your Master. Recently, in a certain Dissertation held before the Most Serene Prince Ernest, Landgrave of Hesse, I heard your countryman Habercorn admit that he receives the Epistle of James as canonical, and confess that it is received by you as well. Therefore I argue against you thus: Saving or life-giving faith, together with a faith dead in itself, is an Ens Rationis. But your Luthero-Calvinist faith is at once life-giving and dead. You cannot deny it. Therefore your Luthero-Calvinist faith is an Ens Rationis.

NICOD. Here you either deceive or are deceived, Aristotle. We do indeed say that faith alone justifies, but not that it is found alone and apart from good works.

ARIST. But Luther did not think so. In his commentary on Galatians 2, he says in express words: "Faith justifies without and before charity." And in the disputation "Whether works contribute to justification": "Faith," he says, "unless it exists without any works, even the least, does not justify — indeed it is not faith." Therefore you depart from your own Luther.

NICOD. I am not Luther's man, but Christ's. Nor did I receive baptism in Luther's name.

ARIST. Not from Luther alone in this matter, but also from St. Augustine, the best and most learned of Christians, do you depart far. For he too, in *On the Trinity* XV.18, says: "Faith can exist without charity, but it cannot profit." Do you hear? He says it *can* exist; you, on the contrary, say it *cannot* exist.

NICOD. I am not Augustine's man, but Christ's.

ARIST. Are you not also John the Apostle's, who is Christ's?

NICOD. Both indeed, but more Christ's.

ARIST. But you dissent from both of them here.

NICOD. Far be that wickedness.

ARIST. I will show it. John, in chapter 12 of his Gospel, writes: "Many even of the rulers believed in him, but they did not confess him... for they loved the glory of men more than the glory of God." Behold faith separated from confession! Behold faith joined with vanity and death-bearing empty glory! But hear the Savior Himself, thinking things quite otherwise from you. Matthew 7: "Many will say to me on

that day, 'Lord, Lord.'" Could they have said this without faith? Certainly not. "Have we not prophesied in your name, and cast out demons, and done many mighty works?" Therefore they illustrated their faith with miracles and wonders wrought by themselves. Hear further: "To whom I will confess: I never knew you; depart from me, all you who work iniquity." Therefore they stained their faith with wickedness worthy of hell. Therefore, by Christ's own testimony, they separated faith from good works. Therefore, that faith cannot be separated from good works is a Luthero-Calvinist Ens Rationis. Therefore, even though you are a deserter from Luther and Augustine, provided you wish to say and think the same as Christ (which I believe you wish), you will not escape or evade the Ens Rationis.

NICOD. This authority of Christ the Lord especially presses hard upon me. But what shall I answer to my own people, that these men did not have a perfect faith, complete in all its parts, but a weak, defective, and by no means saving one?

ARIST. Even if you answer that, you do not escape all the same. For I ask you: what was the defectiveness of that faith? In what did it consist? Certainly you cannot bring forward anything but chimerical thoughts from your storehouse of opinion. Their faith was a true faith in Christ. And if we speak of perfection, it was surely more perfect than the Luthero-Calvinist faith of all of you together.

NICOD. Hold there, Aristotle. Let there be nothing excessive.

ARIST. I speak the very matter itself. For indeed, which of you, however many there are, Lutherans and Calvinists, excels and surpasses in such faith in Christ, that in His name he prophesies, casts demons out of human bodies, commands diseases to depart with a word, restores the dead to life?

NICOD. I have none among us all whom I could name.

ARIST. But those men, by Christ's own testimony, did such things. Therefore they had a far greater and more perfect faith than you.

NICOD. In a certain respect, granted. Simply speaking, I deny it. Ours is saving faith; theirs was not.

ARIST. But why was theirs not saving, and of no profit to salvation, except because it was joined with wicked works? The Savior says expressly: "Depart from me, all you (even the faithful and wonder-workers) who work iniquity." Therefore faith can be separate from good works, and not profit to salvation. But let us proceed to shake out the chimeras of your faith further. Tell me, please — what is that utterly senseless fabrication of Luther and your people, by which they dare to fable that infants in baptism, when they are dipped in the saving water, truly and actually believe? How absurd is that which Crocius recently bandied about from Marburg, that in sleepers actual faith is found (*Controversia* 8, p. 174)! Are these not chimeras fashioned not by waking, but by dozing and deeply snoring heads, in a dream?

NICOD. Forgive, philosopher, John Crocius, who is now an old man, and who in his younger days either never touched philosophy, or certainly did not penetrate it very deeply. Even that passage which you have just cited, and which I recall having examined well myself, shows that Crocius was not accustomed to philosophize very consistently with reason on this matter. For in order to attack Cornaeus, who had asserted that those who die suddenly overcome by lethargy are altogether devoid of any act of faith, arguing from the *habit* of faith, he reasons thus: "He who does not have charity is not in grace. So the Papists commonly say. They also acknowledge that this cannot be without faith. Take away, then, faith from the dying, and you take away charity as well — therefore grace. Therefore those whose senses are oppressed by lethargy do not die in grace. Therefore they do not go into purgatory. Yet according to the Papists, none go there except those

who die in grace. Therefore none go there but those who die in charity. Therefore none but those who die in faith." Thus, while wishing to be subtle, he strips purgatory, for which he fights, of all its guests. Here one might rightly say that Crocius, in wishing to be subtle, plainly shows how little he uses reason, and that he must be held either bound by stupid ignorance, or laboring under a marked perversity of mind, in trying to smear over a manifest truth.

ARIST. What you readily and rightly confess about Crocius is a vice common to all your preachers when they dispute against Catholics. Dionysius Petavius, a man of truly deep learning and most refined judgment, says expressly that heretics, however skilled they may perhaps be in the art of dialectic, nonetheless make no argument against the Catholic faith that is not vicious and poorly cohering, and produce mere paralogisms and perverse reasonings (*Theol. Dogm.*, Bk. I, Prolegomena, ch. 6). And indeed, as I pore over the dissertations of your people, it has more than once occurred to me to wonder whence such unhappiness or heedlessness could creep into minds otherwise often excellent. And from this I conclude that this evil arises from nothing else than that, in willfully striving to defend falsehood, they are struck with that blindness by a just vengeance of the Godhead.

NICOD. Let us set these things aside, if you please, and return to the act of our faith.

ARIST. I am altogether pleased to return, for in that too, as it is handed down by you, there lurks a huge Ens Rationis.

NICOD. I do not indeed understand what there is to blame in it, as though opposed to reason.

ARIST. Can I not? You say that the act of faith — and indeed alone — brings the highest justice to our souls.

NICOD. So I say.

ARIST. But you will never so explain its nature, character, and object, that you do not clash with reason. For I ask you: what must I, a sinner, do in order to become just?

NICOD. You must believe.

ARIST. But what must I believe?

NICOD. That Christ suffered for you, died, and made satisfaction to God the Father on your behalf.

ARIST. Even a most depraved adulterer, robber, or open enemy of God could believe that. For what would prevent someone from believing these things, while meanwhile neither fearing nor loving God, but freely pursuing a wicked life? Therefore this is not the faith which makes an impious man out of me, and acceptable to God.

NICOD. Furthermore, you must believe that, on account of the merits of Christ, your sins have been forgiven you.

ARIST. But that is false. For I have supposed that I am still liable to sins, and am only now beginning to aspire to receive justice. Therefore I cannot, with a true and divine faith, hold and be truly persuaded that I am not liable to sins. Just as, then, it would be a chimera to say to a man gravely suffering from fever that he will be freed from his fever if he firmly believes that he is already free and immune from fever, so it is surely stupid to tell an unjust man that he will straightaway become just and immune from his crimes, with which he is stained, if only he believes that he is immune from them. The object of faith by its nature precedes faith. And unless the thing is really already so, which I believe to be so, I believe falsely, and am deceived by error. And yet not a few Lutherans and Calvinists speak in just this way, when asked what a man must believe in order to become just and saved through faith.

NICOD. It can happen, indeed, that some of our people hallucinate in this manner.

ARIST. You, then, who are wiser than the Luthero-Calvinist crowd, tell me the secret of your religion on this point.

NICOD. There is no need for me to be very much wiser than the crowd in order to set forth a matter not very obscure among us.

ARIST. Set it forth, then, please.

NICOD. Gladly, I will do so. The object of our justifying faith is the promises of God — that on account of the merits of Jesus Christ, our sins are to be forgiven us who believe.

ARIST. O chimera of justifying faith! O monstrosity! Cannot a thief and arch-thief, who neither wishes to be converted nor to become just in any way, but persists desperately in his own wickedness — can he not nonetheless believe, and most firmly believe, that on account of the merits of Christ these sins will be forgiven him at some future time? Do not doubt it. Therefore this is not, nor can it be, justifying faith.

NICOD. Not so fast, Aristotle. I had not yet stated everything that was needful. It is not enough to embrace those divine promises by faith in whatever manner; it is further necessary to apprehend them with trust. And once this is accomplished, the remission of sins immediately follows.

ARIST. A hidden mystery! Tell me, please: that trusting apprehension, by what power of the soul is it finally accomplished? Is it a function of the intellect, or of the will?

NICOD. I believe it belongs to the will.

ARIST. Very well. Therefore it is not an act of faith, but of hope — really and utterly distinct from faith. Therefore justifying faith is not alone, but necessarily takes on trust and hope as companions. Therefore your justifying faith is, and is not, alone. It is alone, because you cling to that stubbornly. It is not alone, because it has trust and

hope as a necessary companion. Therefore your faith alone is an Ens Rationis. Again, I ask: would that man attain the possession of justice, who, knowing and willing, neglected the Sacraments instituted by Christ — who refused to be immersed in baptism, who was unwilling to celebrate the sacred synaxis with the lawful rite?

NICOD. I would think he would not attain it, because it is written: "Whoever believes and is baptized."

ARIST. Therefore not faith alone, but the Sacrament also, justifies. Therefore your faith is, and is not, alone. Therefore it is an Ens Rationis. How much better, then, would you fare, Nicodemus, if with the Catholics you held that faith, not merely sustained by hope, but also formed and animated by charity — and, as the Apostle says, "working through charity" (Gal. 5:6) — renders us just? Does it not seem more equitable to you to assent to James, the Apostle of Jesus Christ, teaching so expressly: "You see that by works a man is justified, and not by faith alone" (James 2:14), than to dare, with Luther and Calvin, to say the contrary — that faith alone is the cause of justice? Wherefore, if you are wise, and do not wish to be mocked by chimerical conceptions of a deluded mind, come over to us Catholics, who, with the ancient orthodox Church and with the ancient prelates and masters of the Christian religion, indeed attribute much to faith in the sacred business of acquiring justice and salvation, yet do not assign that office to faith alone, but also to the other exercises of the supernatural virtues, and especially to the love of God above all things, so that it renders men just.

NICOD. I would not much resist, were it not that my one Saint Paul, as if with a hand thrown out to draw me, pulls me over to Luther's side. For he too plainly excludes all works.

ARIST. Excludes? Where? In what words, then, finally?

NICOD. I will bring forward only two testimonies of the Apostle from many. Romans 3:28: "We reckon that a man is justified by faith, without the works of the law." Do you hear "faith"? Do you hear "works" excluded?

ARIST. I hear "works of the law" — whether Mosaic or of natural law, natural works, which proceed before faith, and not from the grace of faith. These the Apostle rightly excludes. But works of grace, supernatural, having their origin from charity, he without doubt admits — to which he everywhere throughout his epistles exhorts his faithful disciples with such great effort. What? Is there not need of penance? Certainly. Christ Himself requires it: "Unless you do penance, you shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13). Therefore Paul will by no means exclude it either. Therefore he does not exclude every work altogether. Why do you hesitate here?

NICOD. I hesitate much more over another chief saying of Paul.

ARIST. Bring it forward, I beg you.

NICOD. In the same Epistle to the Romans, chapter 3:24: "Justified," he says, "freely, by his grace." Here the Apostle doubles the emphasis: "freely" and "by grace." If freely, therefore without any work. And if a good work were required to obtain justice, it would not be obtained freely. What could be more evident?

ARIST. I do not quite grasp your slowness. Forgive the expression. Grace and gratuitous justification does not exclude every good work which is a congruous disposition toward that end. Far be so unworthy a thought. But it excludes only those works which are merits of condignity. For nothing in us is, or can be, of such goodness as to precede grace and justice and to be able to merit them condignly. Yet there can be good works in us, elicited by the help of actual grace, which as it were pave the way for the justice soon to follow, disposing the mind of man and moving God's beneficence — and thus merit, as

we are accustomed to say, congruously. Nor can you deny this, provided you look at the matter with both eyes. For what if I should attack you with your own words thus: "If we are justified freely, then we are justified without any act, even of faith. And if the act of faith were required to obtain justice, then justice would not be obtained freely" — what would you do here? What would you reply? Answer yourself, please.

NICOD. I say that "freely" does not exclude faith.

ARIST. Excellently said. But if you assert that "freely" and "by grace" do not exclude faith, I will by the same reasoning assert that "freely" and "by grace" do not exclude love and the other good works. And if that word "freely" admits faith, why should it not also admit hope and charity?

NICOD. You have pierced almost to my very soul with these words of yours. And now for the first time I understand that those words of the Apostle do not support my case, nor had I hitherto grasped their genuine sense. Wherefore I ask you to reveal their true meaning, that I may no longer waver on this point.

ARIST. Since you ask, I will reveal it. The Apostle's meaning is to teach that we can merit condignly neither justice nor the forgiveness of sins by any works of the law, whether natural or Mosaic — but neither by any supernatural action, even one assisted by the help of grace. Freely, therefore, and by grace, and without works — that is, without condign merit, and without works meriting condignly — we are justified. Paul does not repel our works which congruously adorn and dispose the mind, but those which by condignity and by their own right could demand justification. For indeed, the Doctor of the Gentiles, understanding that at Rome the faithful, partly from among the Gentiles and partly from among the Jews who had come to baptism, were gravely contending with one another — since the former boasted

that they owed their calling and the grace of faith and Christian justice to their observance of the Mosaic law, the latter to their own rightly performed deeds according to the rule and prescription of reason — reproved and restrained both, showing that neither party thought rightly, but that both, guilty of grave sins, had obtained pardon by the one free liberality of God's mercy. Both indeed had believed in Jesus Christ; both had received baptism; both had grieved with their whole soul over their formerly ill-spent life and their crimes; both had conceived the hope of salvation; both, as they had without doubt been instructed by the Apostles, had loved God — yet not for this reason, by doing these things, had they condignly merited justice. And so today as well, lest you think otherwise, when, aided by divine help and the assistance of grace, we apply ourselves to good works, whether internal or external, we neither do, nor can, condignly merit the first grace and justification which makes sons of God out of the impious. Some of you wrongly impute this to us. Whether they do so from error or from malice of mind, they themselves must see to. Certainly it is false that we think anyone can condignly merit the remission of sins.

NICOD. Yet you require good works for this.

ARIST. Yes, in exactly the manner that you require faith and the use of the Sacraments in that same business of obtaining justice. We require works, not such as are merits of condignity, but only of congruity — not such as demand the forgiveness of sins by their own right, but such as dispose our minds toward it, not according to worthiness, but according to fittingness, and as it were for the sake of propriety, insofar as this can be done.

NICOD. Alas for our own laziness, who think so very differently on this doctrine of yours!

ARIST. Namely, it is almost a pleasure to you to entertain phantoms in your brain and to construct beings of reason about us. Nor should this

seem strange to anyone, since you frequently fashion chimeras and empty, mad fictions of reason even about the mysteries of your own faith.

NICOD. Ha! You speak crudely, philosopher.

ARIST. A certain shamelessness and folly of some of your people scarcely deserves anything else.

§ III.

The third Ens Rationis of the Luthero-Calvinists: All our works, even good ones, are mortal sins.

What indeed, I ask you, could be conceived more mad and fabulous than that which you are accustomed to bandy about among the crowd, that all our works are sins, and mortal ones indeed, and worthy of the everlasting punishments of hell? Is it not an Ens Rationis to say that it is a deadly crime to scratch one's head, to pluck one's beard, to spit, to clear one's throat, to crush a flea with one's nail, to drive away a fly with a fan, to empty the bladder, to relieve the bowels? Is it not a fiction to maintain that it is evil to believe God when He reveals something? To give assent to the Godhead, even when it commands assent to itself? What monstrosity of thought is it to say that a man who, with his greatest possible effort, loves the supreme good and his God, offends Him? What specter of the brain is it to imagine that one who hopes for eternal salvation and strives to attain it thereby forfeits salvation and merits the loss of blessedness? If all our works, even the good ones, are mortal sins, then even the act of faith, by which we of ourselves become just, is a mortal sin. Likewise, that prayer which the Savior taught us — "Forgive us our debts" — by which we obtain forgiveness and pardon for our offenses, is a mortal sin. Can anything more absurd than this be, or be imagined? Is it not monstrous to say that man becomes free from sin and just through sin? That through sin he both seeks and finds

the forgiveness of sin? O fever of the brain! O disorder of the mind!

NICOD. Do not speak so heatedly against us, Aristotle. We say that our works, however good, if weighed by God without mercy and forbearance on the severe scale of justice, are deadly offenses and deserve nothing but hell — but that their wickedness and depravity, in the faithful, is covered over and mitigated through the supreme mercy of the benign Godhead, so that they are no longer sins.

ARIST. Is that so? If in God's just estimation all things are deadly offenses, then in reality, and on the side of the fact, they really are such. For God judges things as they are. Therefore in reality, and on the side of the fact, through sin we become formally just and free from sins, and through evil we become formally good — exactly as if you were to say that something becomes formally cold through heat, and a wall is blackened by whiteness, and something heavy is made light by lightness. Is this not indeed an Ens Rationis? What do you say to this, I ask?

NICOD. I have never worked this out in that manner before. And I can scarcely restrain myself from — I will not say cursing — Luther and Calvin, who plunged me into these opinions.

ARIST. You would rightly do so. For these men not only gravely sin against the sacred pages, thinking so absurdly, but — which I chiefly attend to here — they openly clash with natural reason. For certainly, if good works are mortal sins, then they will be both good works and not good; they will be worthy of reward and of punishment; we will be at once sons of God and sons of the devil, because indeed by the same works we serve both God and the devil. But these plainly contradict one another. Likewise, if good works are mortal sins, there falls upon us the burden and duty both to do them and not to do them. For we are bound to do good and not to do evil. Likewise, God both wills and does not will the same things to be done by us — for He wills the good,

and does not will the evil. Likewise, God is both unjust and not unjust — unjust, indeed, because He commands what He knows to be in reality a death-bearing evil; not unjust, inasmuch as He is God, in whom no injustice falls or can fall. And what, I ask, will you do with these syllogisms, if they are hurled against you? Every good work ought to be done. Some mortal sin is a good work. Therefore some mortal sin ought to be done. Every good work is lawfully and rightly performed by us. Some mortal sin is a good work (for, namely, every good work is by itself a mortal sin). Therefore some mortal sin is lawfully and rightly performed by us. Therefore some mortal sin both is, and is not, lawful — is, because it is supposed; is not, because it is lawfully performed. Likewise, no mortal sin is lawful to do. But every good work, even of faith, is a mortal sin, according to you. Therefore no good work, not even an act of faith, is lawful to do. Likewise, every mortal sin is forbidden. But to you, every good work is a mortal sin. Therefore every good work is forbidden to you. Therefore it is forbidden to you to believe, to hope, to love God, to pray, to give alms. Therefore, according to your faith and religion, those men of old, who publicly proclaimed by law, "Let none of us be useful," were in the right. Who would not exclaim here: What madness! What non-Catholic insanity!

NICOD. I dare not deny, O philosopher, that these things are all but openly repugnant to our reason. But what would you have one do with the word of God, revealed to us in the sacred pages, which drove me and my teachers into this opinion?

ARIST. The word of God is never, nowhere, opposed to right reason. Light does not destroy light, nor is truth opposed to truth.

NICOD. But Isaiah 64 confesses: "We have all become as an unclean thing, and all our righteousness as a menstruous rag." Do you hear "our righteousness"? Do you hear "all"?

ARIST. I hear the words of the prophet, but I also understand their most correct sense. He is speaking in the person of the impious, who at that time formed the greater part of the city, and whose good works, for the most part (though not absolutely all), were infected with harmful depravity. Nor does it matter that he says "all" and "the whole," and so seems to exclude no mortal whatsoever. For this is the custom of Sacred Scripture, familiar and evident to no one who has not penetrated its frequent reading. In Genesis 6 it is stated universally: "All flesh had corrupted its way" — although, by the testimony of that very passage, Noah was a just and perfect man. And Isaiah, in this very chapter about which we are now contending, says just so: "You have met him who rejoices and works justice; in your ways they will remember you" — so that it is plain he was not speaking there, a little before, of all men universally, even the just.

NICOD. But Christ Himself speaks yet more clearly.

ARIST. Where, then?

NICOD. Matthew 6, He bids us pray: "Forgive us our debts."

ARIST. Very well. What follows from that? Does He therefore say that we sin in every work of ours, and commit a death-bearing offense? Pshaw! What a pumpkin-head! What an addled brain!

NICOD. We surely do not ask for what we already have, but for what we do not have. But we always, and in every work, ask that our debts be forgiven us. Therefore we always, and in every work, have debts that need to be forgiven. But these debts are sins. Therefore we always have sins. Is that an argument fit for a pumpkin and a gourd?

ARIST. You seem to yourself to triumph here. But surely, like that Tribocian Abietix of whom you know, you sing the victory-song before the victory. First, indeed, I turn your own subtlety back upon you in this way: We do not ask from God that which we are not going

to obtain, but rather that which, according to Christ's promises ("Ask, and you shall receive"), we shall obtain. But by ourselves, always, and in every work, we ask that our debts be forgiven us. Therefore always, and in every work, we obtain the remission of our debts. Therefore not in every work of ours are there debts and sins. For debts that have been forgiven are no longer debts. Therefore this sword of yours cuts your own throat. Next, I deny the minor of your argument, that in every work, even a good one, we ask for some offense to be forgiven us. Granted, we always ask, because we always commit some venial sin. Yet we do not ask for the sake of always, and for every work, because we do not sin in every work.

NICOD. You have knocked the sword from my hands here. My hand hangs disarmed and weak. Indeed, it irks me that the matter was so insane, and I am deeply grateful to you for having shed light upon my mind.

ARIST. Do you acknowledge, then, that your people wage open war against reason here?

NICOD. I acknowledge it, I acknowledge it. For what pleasure is there in fighting against the truth?

§ IV.

The fourth Ens Rationis of the Luthero-Calvinists: All sins are mortal by their own nature.

ARIST. But this mad fabricating lust of your people does not stop here. For when they clamor that all our sins alike are death-bearing, and this by their very nature and character, they seem indeed to have lost every sense of reason altogether. For what, I ask, does reason allow, that we should hold that a light lie, spoken only for the sake of a joke, deserves the everlasting flames of hell by the equitable judgment of our

Godhead? What right judgment — I do not now say of God, but even of a man not utterly insane — would punish with the same penalty the theft of a single farthing and the public robbery of a mighty kingdom? What arbiter, in whom there is even a grain of intelligence, would hold a light blow, casually struck by a careless hand, no less a deadly offense than the murder of some most excellent man, wickedly perpetrated without any cause? Who but a madman would think that a sudden, fleeting, scarcely half-free thought concerning some unchaste matter, conceived in a moment, is no less death-bearing than if fornication, adultery, even incestuous and sacrilegious defilement, and whatever modesty forbids to name, were all committed freely by deliberate lust of the mind? I would have to go mad myself before I could admit so insane a thought into my mind.

NICOD. It is a ðáñáíîìßá (transgression of law), it is a violation of the divine law, it is, in short, an offense against the infinite Godhead. Is it not a deadly and hell-worthy crime to offend God, who is infinitely good, and worthy of unbounded worship?

ARIST. If one offends Him lightly and scarcely deliberately, in some trifling matter, you are wrong. God is not always gravely offended, but sometimes only lightly — either because His precept binds only lightly, or because a defect of advertence and freedom in us excuses. There is a ðáñáíîìßá, a certain offense against God, which by its very nature and character is not grave, but light, and easily worthy of pardon. Reason — not merely human, but divine as well — dictates, out of equity and mercy, that if either the thing forbidden or commanded is of trifling weight, or the transgression happens with imperfect deliberation, the fault or offense should be judged light, and the punishment weighed more mildly. It is the mark of tyranny, not of just government, to make all offenses equal and to press them with the same penalties. Even though I could, at this point, most certainly charge you with impiety and offense against the Divine Majesty, I will not do so now, but,

continuing in my earlier course, I say that you fabricate Beings of Reason and religious chimeras, when you fable these things. For you make, or rather fashion, a tyrant, a cruel and unjust being, and, as follows from this, you constitute a God who is not God — a monstrosity than which no one could conceive anything more shameful.

§ V.

The fifth Ens Rationis of the Luthero-Calvinists: The precepts of God cannot be observed by us.

Nor is it with any less discord of reason that you commit this folly, in which you teach that the precepts which God has laid upon us to keep cannot be observed by us. I ask you: would not that prince be unjust and a tyrant, who imposed on his subject peoples things impossible to perform, and who then, on the ground that they had not satisfied his commands, tortured and put them to death with the cruelest punishments? Yet, if your doctrine holds, God so deals with us. He commands us not to steal, not to commit adultery, not to kill, not to covet — which, by your own opinion, we cannot help but do. And yet, on account of these very things not omitted, He summons us to judgment, holds us guilty, and condemns us to punishments that will never at any time cease. Therefore God is not God, but a tyrant. Therefore He is an Ens Rationis. What do you think of this — could a Turk, a Jew, a Japanese pagan, or an Indian pagan, or even any man whatsoever, think this way about God? Yet you think it, since indeed you have declared war not only against religion but against reason itself. Not altogether absurdly did someone say in France that the Calvinist religion is a religion, not of men, but of beasts, inasmuch as it holds that God does not rule and treat us as men, but as beasts.

NICOD. Let the Calvinists plead their own case, if they wish. I would think that I could easily free my own Lutheran religion from that ugly reproach, by saying what we do say: that the precepts of God can indeed be fulfilled, but not perfectly.

ARIST. Do you think that enough?

NICOD. I think it quite sufficient to repel that charge.

ARIST. Let us see. I ask you: does God command us to fulfill the law imposed on us perfectly, or not? Answer at once.

NICOD. I hesitate.

ARIST. If He does not command us to fulfill it perfectly, then we do not sin against the law if we do not fulfill it perfectly — because, namely, we omit only what is not commanded of us. Therefore in vain do you distinguish and say that we can fulfill it imperfectly, but not perfectly. For you ought simply, with no other qualification added, to say: "We can fulfill the precept of God." But then you would apostatize from your Luther and Calvin's own opinion.

NICOD. You press me too hard, Aristotle, and drive me into a corner.

ARIST. Answer, if you please. Did God command perfect observance of His precepts, or not?

NICOD. You have already taken away the latter option from me. So I say the former. He commanded it — yes, He commanded it. For what else remains?

ARIST. Now I have you by both ears. You are caught. God commanded that His law be fulfilled perfectly — you yourself said it, and rightly said it. But we cannot fulfill it perfectly — you yourself, from your own mouth, have already said this too. Therefore we cannot fulfill the law of God and its commands simply, and in the manner in

which God commanded it — and indeed He commanded it under threat of everlasting punishment. Therefore God is unjust, and not God. Therefore here too you do not escape the Ens Rationis.

NICOD. God holds supreme dominion over us. Nor is it tyranny if He commands whatever pleases His own will.

ARIST. So indeed, if it pleases the divine will. But what is impossible to be done, that it should please the divine will — that, by the very same reasoning, is impossible. It cannot please God to will the impossible, since He knows that He would will it in vain. Not even a man, so long as he is not insane and uses reason, could act so — much less the Godhead, who displays the highest wisdom in conducting affairs. And even if God, in commanding impossible things by virtue of His supreme dominion over us, were not unjust or cruel, He would certainly be utterly inept and imprudent, in that He would put forth a law in vain and necessarily doomed to fail of its effect. But a God who is imprudent and inept is no less "not God" and an Ens Rationis than a God who is unjust and cruel. Therefore you are caught here too.

NICOD. Ah! How exceedingly true that is.

ARIST. I will not here call in auxiliary troops from the sacred page, by which I could utterly overwhelm your error. I will not adduce the Savior's saying in Matthew 11, "My yoke is sweet and my burden light." I will not adduce Paul's, Philippians 4, "I can do all things in him who strengthens me." I will not bring forward the examples of Noah, just and perfect (Gen. 17); not David's; not Josiah's (3 Kings 14, 15, 23); not Zachary and his wife (Luke 1); not the Apostles', by the Savior's own testimony, fulfilling the word of God the Father (John 17:6). By reason alone, I shake your chimerical dogma, and show it to be an Ens Rationis. For if the precepts of God were impossible to keep, they would be precepts, and they would not be. They would be, on the hypothesis granted by both sides; they would not be, because they

would bind no one. For of impossible things there neither is, nor can be, either law or obligation, since it would be empty and vain. Likewise, man would sin, and would not sin. He would sin, because he acted against the law. He would not sin, because he omitted what he could not do, or did what he could not help but omit. Whoever says that to be a sin which one cannot help but do or omit, surely builds a grand Ens Rationis in his own head. Let me go on. No one can attain eternal salvation without faith. But if God's law is impossible to keep, then faith too is impossible. For faith is imposed on us chiefly through the law of God. Therefore, if the law of God is impossible to keep, eternal salvation is also impossible for us. Therefore we must at once hope for salvation and not hope for it. We must hope, because God commands it. We must not hope, because we neither can nor ought to hope for what we know to be impossible.

NICOD. My opinion is thrashed by reason, and gravely so. But the sacred pages support me, so that I do not waver. St. Peter, Acts 15, freely confesses that the yoke of the law could not be borne. "Why," he says, "do you tempt God, to put upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear?"

ARIST. The Prince of the Apostles is speaking of the ancient law, not taken universally as it comprised the necessary means of salvation, but specifically of that part which imposed certain grave and difficult ceremonies — namely, sacrifices, circumcision, abstinence from various meats — which were not indeed simply intolerable, since in fact they were observed without complaint by many with God's help, but were performed only with difficulty and great trouble by most. The Apostle's meaning, then, is that it is not fitting that so heavy a ceremonial law should be imposed on the Gentiles converted to the faith, especially since it would not thereafter be necessary for salvation.

NICOD. But the moral law, which concerns morals, is not merely difficult but even impossible, according to the testimony of the sacred

page.

ARIST. Far be it.

NICOD. James confesses it, chapter 2: "In many things we all offend." And in 1 John 1 I read: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves."

ARIST. Very well. What do you infer from that?

NICOD. Therefore we all have sins.

ARIST. Granted. What further?

NICOD. Therefore no one, even with grace and faith, fulfills the whole law.

ARIST. What then? What follows?

NICOD. Therefore no one could have fulfilled it.

ARIST. A lame inference. Many things indeed we do not do daily, not because we cannot do them, but because it is not pleasing to do them, and because we do not wish to. The sins with which we daily stain our life indicate not necessity but our own weakness.

NICOD. But do you not confess that even venial sins, as you call them, are against the law of God?

ARIST. I confess it willingly.

NICOD. Yet all of them, especially taken together at once, cannot be avoided by you. So your own people freely confess and teach — is it not so?

ARIST. Certainly, physically, all of them, taken both singly and all together, can be avoided. Otherwise they would not be sins. And this none of us denies. But when we say that it is impossible to avoid all of

them taken together at once, you must understand that of a moral impossibility. Now moral impossibility is nothing other than a certain very troublesome difficulty, so great that it is overcome by no one, even with the ordinary grace of God, although in fact it could be overcome. This doctrine of ours, therefore, avails you nothing.

NICOD. You drive me from every position, and overwhelm me with so many Beings of Reason that I scarcely know which way to turn.

§ VI.

The sixth Ens Rationis of the Calvino-Lutherans: That it is evident that the Bible is the true and pure word of God.

ARIST. Yet you are not satisfied with this much. Let us come to the Bible, if you please. Do not your preachers assert it as evident, self-evident, and utterly certain that the Bible is the true, legitimate, and altogether uncorrupted word of God?

NICOD. They say so, and I say so along with them. And unless I say so, how could I give firm and undoubting faith? For certainly, if it is uncertain and doubtful to me whether that which is proposed to me for belief is truly the word of God, I cannot possibly give a certain and infallible assent of faith to it.

ARIST. What then follows?

NICOD. Therefore, in order to believe, I must be certain and sure that it is the word of God.

ARIST. Let it be so. What then?

NICOD. Therefore it must be evident to me that the Bible, or this word, is the word of God.

ARIST. You infer unskillfully. Can certainty and security of mind not stand together with obscurity and without evidence? Is not the certainty and security of faith the highest? And yet it is not evident, but obscure. Therefore you can be certain and secure about the word of God, even though it is not evident to you that this word is the word of God. And here you fall into what is quite common among the other Popes of your sect — that you ignorantly confuse certainty with evidence, or do not understand in what each of them properly consists. It is one thing to be certain, quite another to be evident. It is a shameful crime, which your Dannhauer recently dared to blurt out — namely, that it is evident, and indeed with the highest, moral, physical, and metaphysical evidence, that these Bibles are the true word of God. This is either madness or stupidity, morally, physically, and I would almost say metaphysically evident and absurd, more deserving of a cudgel than of reasoning.

NICOD. I would not wish here to plead Dannhauer's lost cause in this kind. I confess it cannot be said without astonishment that the evidence of the Scriptures and of the written word of God being truly such is moral and physical, and indeed the highest, and moreover metaphysical. Whoever asserts that has the head, not of a man, but of a cabbage, for a brain. To me, indeed, evidence of whatever sort, physical or moral, suffices.

ARIST. You rave more mildly indeed, but you still rave. For I ask you: is it evident to you and to your intellect that the Bibles which we hold in our hands contain in themselves the true and infallible word of God — that nothing fabricated is found in them, nothing fabulously invented, nothing intruded through carelessness, nothing corrupted through deceit or through folly, opposed to the divine faith?

NICOD. It is altogether evident.

ARIST. If that is evident, plain, and clear — is it such in itself, or in something else? Which do you finally say?

NICOD. In itself; the word of God is clear in itself. The word of God is light, and, so to speak, the sun of the faithful world. Just as the sun, that great eye of the orb, not only renders all other things bright and visible, but also presents itself, by that same brightness, to the sight of mortals, and presents itself in such a way as to remove all doubt about itself — so the Scripture of the Bible, or the word of God set down in the Bible, not only sets forth to us all that we must believe, but also so exposes itself to the minds of the faithful, clearly and plainly, that it drives away all the shadows of error.

ARIST. How clearly you err! If it is in itself clear and plain that the Bible is the true word of God, why do not all who are endowed with eyes and mind acknowledge and see it? Why is there need of such great effort to persuade Turks and pagans of it? Certainly things which are in themselves and clearly known become easily evident to everyone through the mere explanation of the terms. But it is not evident to everyone — even to those who have grasped the explanation of the terms perfectly well — that the Bible is the true word of God. Therefore it is not clear in itself. If the Bible and the written word of God offer themselves so clearly to our intellect, exactly as the sun is wont to offer itself to bodily eyes, how does it happen that the greater part of mortals is ignorant of this matter? Who doubts about the sun and its light, on account of its clarity and evidence? No one denies that the sun exists or shines, except one deprived either of eyes or of mind. But that the Bible is the true word of God, more people doubt, and even flatly deny — even among those mortals who, otherwise endowed with reason, philosophize and reason well. Therefore it is evident, and almost more than evident, that it is not as plain that the Bible is the word of God, as it is plain that the sun exists and shines.

NICOD. Yet the word of God is called the light of the soul and a lamp to our feet, is it not?

ARIST. Yes, and truly so, if it is once taken as such, and its true sense is grasped. But it is not grasped by everyone. Therefore it is not self-evidently clear to all.

NICOD. But light is clear in itself, of itself, and through itself. Light is formal clarity. Therefore it shines through itself. Just as heat is hot through itself, and whiteness is white, and sweetness is sweet. Why do you hesitate here, philosopher? Is this not a clear matter?

ARIST. Light, without doubt, just as it is light through itself, so it shines and becomes clear to sight through itself. But not every light is so perfect in this way that it drives away every degree of darkness from its subjects and objects. You might find some light so nearly overcome by an accompanying gloom that heat found somewhere in an opposing cold is not indeed altogether driven out, but is tempered and nearly overcome. Such is the divine faith which we obtain concerning the word of God. It does not drive all obscurity from our minds, but, clothed in a certain sacred and reverend darkness, demands from us, as its right, the prompt obedience of a devout assent. The word and revelation of God is a lamp in the dark place of this mortal life (do you recognize the Apostle's voice?), so shining that it shows the will the path of salvation sufficiently, yet does not bring to the intellect the clarity of evidence.

NICOD. Light drives away non-light. But the word of God is light, and obscurity is non-light. Therefore the word of God drives away obscurity. Therefore the word of God is evident in itself. Is this not evident?

ARIST. In the manner of your own Braggarts, you sing your triumph before the victory — and about an Ens Rationis, no less. For if you held the first rudiments of philosophy and of natural science, you would

not sin so childishly against the light. Show me, if you can, the fault. Answer to the form of my argument. Your major premise is this: Light drives away non-light. Will you deny this?

ARIST. I do not deny it at all, if you take "light" and "non-light" universally, as you seem to do. But for the sake of greater clarity and precision, I distinguish the major thus: Light drives away every non-light — I deny this. It drives away some non-light, namely that which is opposed to it — I grant this. Light, as one, drives away formally and through itself always non-light as one, and this by a fatal and inevitable necessity. But that same light, as one, does not drive away non-light as two, as three, as seven. For one light can coexist, and indeed often does coexist, in the air, with a non-light or obscurity and darkness as seven. Do you grasp this sufficiently? I would scarcely doubt it, unless you are of the stock of Veraudanus the Tribocian, whose light is Cimmerian darkness.

NICOD. Alas! You have darkened my mind for me, Aristotle. Now I see clearly that some light can be obscure and unclear. But that the word of God is of such a nature that it is not in itself entirely clear is now exceedingly clear to me.

ARIST. And it will become even clearer, if you weigh the matter itself, as it lies before your eyes, in your own mind. For in order for it to be evidently true, certain, and secure to you that these Bibles are the genuine word of God, it must be evidently certain to you that they were composed by divine inspiration, and not by some human and fallible dictate, like other books of learned men. But whence, indeed, is this certain to you, and evidently certain? Were you personally present when Moses wrote the Pentateuch? When Luke or Matthew described the Gospel? When Paul composed his epistles, or John his Apocalypse, and sealed them? Did you drink in the divine spirit either with your eyes or your ears, when it stirred the mind of those sacred writers, when it guided their hand, when it directed their pen? How do you evidently

know that these are the books of those whose names they bear? How do you evidently know that they have not been falsely substituted, corrupted by the injuries of time, falsified through the carelessness of scribes, depraved, vitiated, mutilated, mutilated of members, deformed by additions through the wickedness of heretics and other enemies of the faith — so that where they ought to affirm, they deny, and where they ought to deny, there they affirm, and thus thrust upon us not so much a truth fallen from heaven as a falsehood sprung up on earth? Certainly these corruptions could have happened, and in some cases it is exceedingly certain that they have happened. How, then, do you evidently know that the Bibles have not suffered the same fault?

NICOD. You examine me almost too closely, Aristotle, when you scrutinize things so minutely. It never occurred to me to inquire so precisely into these matters. It seemed sufficient to me — both the authority of our forebears, and the gilded, painted title of the books themselves. For what? Do you not read: "The Gospel of Jesus Christ according to Matthew"? Do you not use your own eyes to read that plain heading: "The Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans, to the Corinthians, to the Hebrews"?

ARIST. What a simpleton you are! The authority of forebears, however venerable, is external, and by its nature obscure. Therefore it cannot produce evidence. How often do resplendent titles at the front lie? Surely even the Qur'an of the Turks displays, with a specious show, the name of the word of God — not to mention the Gospels of Thomas, Bartholomew, Nicodemus, marked with the title of Jesus Christ — which, however, none of you allows to be sold to himself as the legitimate word of God. Therefore the title of the Bibles, however jewel-adorned, does not, nor can it, procure the evidence of the divine word. Finally — forgive me, in my own opinion — if you go on to say that it is evident to you that the Bible contains the pure and unadulterated, in no way doubtful word of God, this evidence is

imaginary, and a stupid and blockish Ens Rationis.

NICOD. Alas, philosopher, what are you doing? You call the word of God and the sacred Bible itself an Ens Rationis!

ARIST. I do not so call the very word of God and the sacred Bible itself, but that evidence which you fabricate — that I resent, and rightly reprove.

NICOD. Yet it is hard for me to hear. I cannot indeed sufficiently repel this insult — but...

ARIST. But what?

NICOD. It is troublesome to be called a blockhead, and blockish at that.

ARIST. But it is far worse to be one.

NICOD. What if one of us should say that the Bible contains the word of God evidently, not with evidence in itself, but in something else?

ARIST. If he says that, I ask him what that "something else" is. Certainly that other thing must be evident in itself, and must moreover have a necessary connection with this — that the Bibles contain the true word of God. Now I press you: what is that other, evident-in-itself, and, if you can show it, necessary and infallible connection? Where is it? Why do you delay? Why do you hesitate? Come, produce it.

NICOD. I hesitate, anxious, and cannot give myself a sufficiently ready answer. It is easier to confess that this evidence asserted by our people is contrary to reason.

ARIST. And an Ens Rationis.

NICOD. Yes — only do not add "blockish." That is too bitter a word.

ARIST. Very well. I will willingly grant that to your favor, provided you also acknowledge another Luthero-Calvinist Ens Rationis, fabricated about that same Bible.

NICOD. What is that?

§ VII.

The seventh Ens Rationis of the Luthero-Calvinists: That the Bible is clear and plain.

ARIST. Namely, your common saying is: "The Bible is clear and plain." This is surely no less absurd and alien to all reason than if someone should fable that fire freezes, and snow burns. Certainly the most learned champions of our faith, and the eagle of the Christian Church, in every age, have striven with all the powers of their genius to penetrate the genuine sense of the sacred page and to hand it down to less learned peoples — yet none of them has exhausted every difficulty, or dispelled all the shadows. Indeed, they themselves not obscurely confess that they are not equal to elucidating the Bible. St. Augustine, how great a man in genius! In *On Faith and Works*, ch. 15-16, he candidly acknowledges that that saying of St. Paul, "If any man build upon the foundation" (1 Cor. 3), is difficult of understanding to him. And in Book 2 of *On Christian Doctrine*, ch. 6, he says: "In the sacred letters, certain obscure sayings cast the densest darkness — all of which, I do not doubt, was provided by divine design, for the taming of pride, etc." And in Epistle 119, ch. 21: "In the sacred Scriptures themselves, I know not how much more there is that I do not know than that I do know." St. Jerome, who wore out nearly every wiser age in the Bible, in his letter to Algasia, question 8, says: "Every epistle to the Romans is wrapped in excessive obscurities." What do you think of this now — where eagles blink, do the Luthero-Calvinist owls keep their eyes unhurt? Where the lynxes go blind, do the moles see sharply?

NICOD. Do not attack us so hotly, Aristotle. We do not deny that many things in the sacred pages are obscure, and escape the sharpness of most men's minds. We are not so dull as to be ignorant of that. We assert, however, that all those things which are necessary to be believed for salvation, and which it altogether concerns us to know, are so plain that they can easily be perceived and understood by anyone, even without the help of an interpreter.

ARIST. But even in asserting this, you build an Ens Rationis, a chimera. Even in matters necessarily pertaining to the faith, the Bible grows exceedingly dark. What? Does not the mystery of the Trinity and the Incarnation pertain to the Christian faith? And yet both of these chief points are attacked, and all but overthrown, by heretics and by those who freely accept the authority of Scripture and diligently apply themselves to its reading, using the very testimonies of Scripture itself. If the written word of God plainly stated what must be held concerning the faith, it could not happen that men endowed with sound mind should fall into such diverse opinions concerning the faith, with the greatest ruin of souls. I will not here adduce the testimony of Peter, who, in the last chapter of his second Epistle, openly declares that in the Epistles of Paul there are many things hard to understand, which the unlearned and unstable distort to their own destruction — without doubt such things as concern necessary faith and the business of salvation. For only the distortion of these could be a cause of destruction. By reason alone I prove your Ens Rationis, and thus show it: that concerning which the most learned men have vehemently disputed for many centuries down to the present is not plain; and whoever says it is plain fabricates an Ens Rationis. But concerning the genuine sense of the sacred page, even regarding those things which pertain to the necessary faith, the most learned men down to the present vehemently dispute. Therefore the genuine sense of the sacred page, even concerning those things which pertain to the necessary faith, is not plain, and whoever calls it plain fabricates an Ens Rationis. Tell

me, please: do you hold the Arians, Nestorians, Eutychians, Macedonians, and all the rest who have hitherto attacked our faith, and indeed with arguments drawn from the sacred page, to be fools who were not able, or wicked men who were not willing, to perceive the sincere sense of the divine word?

NICOD. I think indeed that very many of them were outstanding in heart and sharpness of intellect, and excelled in a certain natural modesty and honesty of mind.

ARIST. And yet these men, after diligently searching out the sense of Scripture, gravely dissented — both from one another, and from us. Certainly there can be no other cause of this than that it was by no means clear and plain. For no man doubts, or seriously and sincerely disputes, about what is evident. What do you think — is this not clearer than the noonday light?

NICOD. I dare not resist any further. I have used the eyes of owls up to this very day, for which the darkest night was as daylight. Now, led by your splendid light into the work, I myself condemn my own former darkness.

ARIST. Do you confess, then, that your bearded preachers are peddlers and hucksters of Beings of Reason?

NICOD. I am compelled to confess it, however much I might wish otherwise.

§ VIII.

The eighth Ens Rationis of the Luthero-Calvinists: Falsest slanders fabricated against Catholics, and especially against the Jesuits.

ARIST. And what do you think of these same people of yours, when with such brazen face they invent slanders against Catholics, and especially against the Jesuits — not merely boldly proclaiming them from the pulpit, but scattering them abroad among the crowd, most wickedly and treacherously, through public print, in notorious pamphlets? I ask you: was it not an Ens Rationis, that Cardinal Bellarmine had freely become a Calvinist, and for that cause was poisoned by the Pope — oppressed by the consciousness of monstrous crimes, in despair, strangled and carried off by an evil demon? Your people printed this, declaimed it from the pulpit, sang it through the streets to the applauding stupor of the crowd. Was it not an Ens Rationis, that the Jesuits of Mainz, sent to Kraków, were there put to the supreme penalty for unspeakable crimes committed? Yet that was a fabrication of your storytellers, which they scattered through the towns and regions of all Germany in the year 1586, to the astonishment of all Poland at so insane a slander, refuted by the public letters of the King and their own magistrates. Was it not an Ens Rationis, that Father George Scherer, a Jesuit, pretending to raise a dead man to life, was caught in the fraud and fled from Vienna — a chimerical tale wickedly fabricated by a certain Augsburg preacher by trade, one Bartholomew Rülich, hiding under the pseudonym of Baruch Molithor, disguised by an anagram? And although the slander had been authentically suppressed by the public testimony of the Consul and Senate of Vienna in the year 1606, John Crocius has recently dared, through a repeated persistence in slander, to reproduce it. I ask you: was it not an Ens Rationis, that recent triumphal "Valete" recently printed by the Strasbourg preacher — that vain and more than childish boast of Dannhauer's Polypyrgonic pretension, by which he made a Goliath out of a dwarf, that he might swagger with grander pomp — by which he vends the tale that Cornaeus the Jesuit was routed from his position, by whom that man lies most foully wounded and slain? What, finally, is the persistent mendacity of that liar who prostitutes himself, accusing of falsehood the miracle at Mariazell, most attested throughout the

whole neighborhood? What raving mendacity produces that infamous, scurrilous pamphlet of the Jansenist Montalte, stuffed with the falsest accusations against the Jesuits? Namely, as it is sweet for the wretched to have a companion in punishment, so it is a pleasure for the Lutheran slanderer to have a companion slanderer in the Jansenist — Dannhauer sought out Montalte, like seeking like, birds of a feather. You Germans have an old proverb. I could indeed fill a whole tenth volume, and no small portion of some library, if I chose to gather into one all those writings stuffed with slanders and lies against the Jesuits alone that have issued from your presses. I certainly have not, in my travels over the whole wide world, and throughout every age of history that I have been able to know from records and annals, found a similar shamelessness and lust for fabricating and inventing whatever one pleases. And indeed, what is more contrary to reason than to attack others — even enemies, granted — with false fabrications? And that, too, in the business of religion? In the cause of the divine faith? Where the destruction of the soul is at stake? Where eternal salvation is in peril? How could I persuade myself that I would find the divine and saving faith among those to whom not even human good faith is a matter of concern — who cannot explain their own dogmas without false slanders — who strive to defend their religion with lies? I judge that truth and the true faith of Christ have no need of paint and fictions. Hence nothing, indeed, has ever turned me so much away from your non-Catholic assembly and Church as seeing your preachers — from whom I ought to have drawn the doctrine of the faith — to be so shamelessly false and mendacious.

NICOD. It is a shameful thing, I confess, nor has that itch of slandering and rashly blurting out anything at all ever pleased my own mind. Even against enemies, one ought to act by virtue rather than by evil deceit. But what can one do, philosopher? Many men do many things which it would be more fitting not to do.

ARIST. This is precisely what I have been doing, and have done thus far: since I understand that your preachers wage war against genuine truth in this manner, I henceforth believe them in nothing at all. He who has been caught lying once should rightly be trusted by no one further. And truly, this reason alone ought to be enough for me, or for any other man using reason, to prefer the Roman Catholic Church to your Lutheran and Calvinist one. In this Church, as I began to live a Christian, so I shall end my life living. She alone philosophizes about God and divine things with reason. She proposes, indeed, certain mysteries of the faith, and truly reverend sacraments, which far exceed natural reason, yet overturn it in nothing. Wherefore, if you are wise, follow me and reason together, and bid Luther farewell, and come over to the Catholic camp, to fight together with me for truth and for the sincere faith and religion.

NICOD. We shall have occasion to speak of this another time. For now I owe you great thanks, that you have freed me today from not just one error. Furthermore, I ask you, as I indicated at the outset, not to spread abroad this conversation of ours. I would not want it to become known to others what has passed between you and me today. In return, I promise you this: even if I do not become a Roman Catholic, I shall nonetheless be less hostile toward Roman Catholics henceforth.

THE END.